THE CONVERSION OF THE KING

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT

YOUTH LODGE

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BY

YOUTH LODGE LONDON
of the Theosophical Society in England

Edited by Christmas Humphreys, M.A., LL.B. Cantab.
President of Youth Lodge

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EDITORIAL FOREWORD

THIS play is one of a series of seven, each presenting in dramatic form one or more of the fundamental principles of the Ancient Wisdom-Religion or Theosophy. The plays are all short and simple, needing no scenery, few characters or properties, and only a very small stage.

They have been written to overcome the two main difficulties that face the increasing number of Drama Groups now appearing all over the world within the Theosophical Movement. Firstly, there is a dearth of short Theosophical plays of any kind, and secondly, the performance of such plays as there are usually entails the payment of substantial royalties. By arrangement with the publishers, therefore, the plays in this series may be performed throughout the world, in public or privately, free of charge. At the same time, it is hoped that the spirit of this concession will be respected, and that no individual will attempt to make money out of the production of the plays. To this end the authors of the series have retained all rights of production in their own hands, and all applications and inquiries about production should be made to me, c/o the publishers.

The first two plays in the series are now on sale. Three more are ready for publication, while the remaining two are being written. It rests with the public to decide if and when the other five will be published, as the appearance of further plays will naturally depend on the reception afforded these two. Those readers, therefore, who see in this series an attempt to supply a long-felt want, and at the same time to open up a new field of Theosophical propaganda, will have it in their own hands to decide whether the outcome of our venture be failure or success.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS.

CHARACTERS

THE KING . .	*Thirty or so, and unmarried. A good ruler of his kind. Outwardly warlike, pleasure-loving and despotic, but with a philosophic bent.*
THE COUNSELLOR .	*Many years older than the King. With all his generalship and ruling ability, but with none of his introspection. A blunt, honest, soldier-politician. Devoted to war and the development of the Empire.*
A WOMAN SAINT .	*About the King's age. Sweet-faced, with a quiet, patient manner and a soft voice.*
THE FIRST GIRL .	*Pretty, plump and pleasure-loving. Given to a life of sensuous enjoyment. Fond of the King in a way, partly for himself, but more for what he represents, comfort, and lazy luxury. Inclined to take things as she finds them.*
THE SECOND GIRL.	*As above, but with a far more active nature. Deeply in love with the King for himself, quite apart from his status.*
A SERVANT . .	*Of any age and of either sex.*

SCENES

SCENE I.—*A Private Apartment in the Palace of the King.*

SCENE II.—*The same, one hour later.*

TIME.—*Evening.*

The play is of no particular country or period, for though it is founded on the conversion of the Emperor Asoka in India some 300 years B.C., it is at the same time an allegory of human evolution.

NOTE

THIS play was first performed by Members of Youth Lodge on the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Theosophical Society, November 17th, 1925, at the Mortimer Halls, London, with the following cast:—

THE KING	CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS.
THE COUNSELLOR . .	CHARLES CLARE.
THE SAINT	CLARE SOPER.
THE FIRST GIRL . . .	SYLVIA CAMPBELL.
THE SECOND GIRL . .	PAMELA HENN COLLINS.
THE SERVANT . . .	ROY DE MEL.

Costumes designed and executed by "Silvia," 43, South Molton Street (Miss Campbell and Miss Henn Collins). Play produced with the assistance of Miss Muriel Pope (Mrs. Clifford Mollison).

THE CONVERSION OF THE KING

SCENE I

Private apartment of the King. Back Centre a curtained door leading into a corridor of the Palace. Left Centre, half facing the audience, a throne-chair. Right, between door and front, a divan covered with cushions.
An empty stage.

(*Enter Right,* COUNSELLOR — *glances round — impatiently paces up and down. Enter Centre Back, the* TWO GIRLS, *laughing and talking.*)

1ST GIRL. (*To* 2ND GIRL.) A truly handsome man. . . . But see! Who's this that imitates the captive animal?
My Lord, the King's most faithful Counsellor! (*Crosses to divan and sits.*)
2ND GIRL. (*Follows and sits.*) In roguish mood, 'twould seem. Observe the joy
That lights the beauty of his countenance.
1ST GIRL. See too——
COUNSELLOR. (*Angrily.*) Enough. The King has summoned me.
Wherefore I came, and wherefore you may go.
(*Merriment on part of* GIRLS, *interrupted by entrance of* SERVANT *through Back Centre door.*)
SERVANT. My Lord the King.

(*Enter* KING *through same door.* 2ND GIRL *runs up to* KING, *who puts an arm round her, saying :*)

KING. At last. Another day
Behind us in the weary round of time.
Yet honest toil deserves its recompense
Of play. (*To* GIRLS.) How say you ? (*To* SERVANT.)
Boy, a flask of wine,
And cheerful music, and the joyous sound
Of merriment. (*Exit* SERVANT, *Centre Back.*)
(*Seeing* COUNSELLOR for first time.)
And why so glum, dear Friend ?

COUNSELLOR. You summoned me, my Lord.

KING. I summoned you !
(*Graciously.*) Say, rather, we invited you to share
The idle pleasures of an idle hour.
The cares of this our well-beloved realm
Considered, and our subjects' weal assured
As best beseemed the judgment of our mind,
We purposed to assail the dying hours
Of day with wine and soothing melody.
And having with an anxious brooding eye,
Noted the furrowed purport of your brow,
'Twas in our mind to bid you to our board
And make you welcome there. The gloom of day
Sits ill upon the countenance of night,
And song and dance are fatal to dull care.

COUNSELLOR. (*Coldly.*) I thank you, Sire, for this your courtesy,
Yet would I fain withdraw. I am a man
Whose hand is happier on a weapon's hilt
Than—(*indicating* KING, *who is stroking* 2ND GIRL)—silken heads of hair. Rather, my Lord,
I would be gone, to order and prepare
The death of certain of your enemies
Who die at dawn.

KING. How now ? What's this you say ?
Ah, yes. I have it now—three goodly men
And brave, who, living, would but strive . . . and strive

To bring about my death; and dead . . . the grave
They say was never yet man's enemy.
(*Crosses to divan.*) So be it, if it must be so.
(2ND GIRL *takes cloak and arranges it over throne.*)
(*Settles into cushions with* 1ST GIRL.) Farewell.
(*Enter* SERVANT *Right.*)
(COUNSELLOR *bows, moves to Right exit, but meeting* SERVANT *coming in, waits.*)
And so from kingly duty's cold embrace
To the warm arms of love.
(*To* SERVANT *who has now reached him.*) Is all prepared ?
SERVANT. My Lord, a holy Mother waits without
And craves your audience.
KING. (*Impatiently.*) With what intent ?
Will not the morrow serve ? Why then *this* hour ?
My mind is surfeited with duty. Well ?
SERVANT. She wills to plead with you, most noble Lord,
For those who die at dawn.
KING. Then bid her go.
I weary of her kind. Most excellent
The purpose of their hearts, but such affairs
Lie better in the hands of men. No, no.
My word was well considered ere it left
The portals of my mind. Bid her begone,
Yet graciously, as well becomes her kind.
SERVANT. Such was the tenor of my own reply,
Who sought to guard the sanctity of this
Your private leisure hour. To no avail,
Her purpose yet remained inviolate.
KING. (*Wearily.*) Then bring her to me here.
(*Exit* SERVANT *Right.*)
(*Over his shoulder to* COUNSELLOR.) This touches you,
And your most dutiful resolve.
(*Getting up.*) Stay then
Awhile, and you yourself shall fairly judge
Upon the merits of her plea.
(*Crosses wearily to throne, and seeing* 2ND GIRL,

who is standing behind it, signs her to sit at his feet. She crosses to divan and pulls a cushion almost from under 1ST GIRL, *crosses to the throne and settles herself at the* KING'S *feet.*)

My heart
Was never yet so set upon this work
Of death, that brief delay gave not a sense
Of some unreasoning relief.
(*Enter* SAINT *quietly from Right door.*) She comes.
(*Addressing her quickly before she can speak.*)
Good Mother, we would have you know you find
Us at our ease, and though our courtesy
Demanded that we give you audience,
We pray you yet be brief.

SAINT. (*Halting Centre stage.*) I will be so
Most puissant Lord, and guardian of the lives
That sleep within this realm to-night, I come
To plead, if need be at thy feet, for those
Who die at dawn. These are no criminals
That forfeit life in payment of the past,
With Justice as their judge. No traitors these,
That stab the life of him that gave them theirs.
What, then, is this their crime that they must die ?
That they have fought with clean and open hands
To guard the sacred freedom of their lands
From foreign dominance ? Is this a crime ?
Would you, my Lord, in equal circumstance,
Have spared to do the same ? You answer not.
What then ? Fear you to let them go ? My Lord
The King afraid, and lest his fear be known,
To kill the fearless objects of his fear ?
Is this, my Lord, a sign of kingliness ?

KING. (*Uneasily.*) Enough. It is the custom of our time
And known to all, that those of noble rank
Who find not death upon the field of war
Yet fall into our hands, must lose their life,
Else should we surely jeopardise our own.

SAINT. And yet, my Lord . . .
COUNSELLOR. (*Interrupting angrily.*) Have you no eyes to see
The King is weary of you ?
SAINT. Think you so ?
Then whence the troubled aspect of his eye ?
KING. (*Waking from reverie, and pushing aside* 2ND GIRL *from his feet.*)
Tell me, good Mother, for I fain would know,
In what belief or what philosophy
Is couched this foolish sanctity of life ?
By life I mean the life of all that lives,
Who nothing care for those for whom you plead
To-night. They do but illustrate your theme,
And symbolise your constant attitude.
For always have the noblest of your kind
Proclaimed this unity of life, and now
I would know more.
COUNSELLOR. (*Scornfully.*) What more is there to know ?
'Tis but a sentiment, a woman's whim,
Who know not courage and who cringe in fear
Before the sight of blood. What, then, is death
To fear it so ? 'Tis but an incident
Of life, as wine, and love, and war. (*Crosses to* KING.)
(*Suddenly, earnestly.*) Most dear
Beloved Lord. Let not the manly strength
And wisdom of your thought be undermined
By any woman's art, but speak the word
By which we may be free—you for the joy
You find in this (*the room*) and these (*the* GIRLS), and I, who like
Them not, to serve the purpose of the King.
KING. First would I gain the knowledge that my mind
Has ever sought for, though I knew it not
'Til now. (*To* SAINT.) Speak on. I wait for your reply.
(2ND GIRL *resumes her first position with her arm across* KING'S *knees.*)

SAINT. Alas, I am no skilled philosopher,
Nor trained in intellectual subtlety.
Only I speak as one who knows not fear,
Nor any doubt in telling of those things
That lie so close within a woman's heart.
To me, who hate the crudities of war
And all the foolish emptiness of strife,
All Life is One. The woods, the open sky,
Man, and the humblest insect on the wall,
And everything that is, share in a way
Most wonderful to those who understand
A common heritage. What lies behind
The beauty of a flower ? What force compels
The movement of a swiftly homing bird ?
Is there no life in jewels, is the sea
That sweeps the confines of your kingdom—dead ?
Say, rather, that the same immortal flame
That shines within the monarch and the dust
Is but the one sweet life of Him, Who now
And here, as everywhere, enfolds us all.
KING. Is this your God to whom you ever pray ?
SAINT. Say rather the reflection of our God,
Whose life is everywhere yet nowhere is.
KING. Such Being enters not my life. I stand
Or fall in times of stress by this my own
Right arm. So that I win, the honour then
Is mine. So that I fail, I can at least
Accept defeat with dignity. In brief,
For good or ill, *I* am my only God.
SAINT. I spoke not of a Being but of That
Which binds us all—that Power and that Strength,
That joyous Love and Beauty that pervades
The heart of all.
KING. What then is this but Law ?
Such can I understand, a Universe
Controlled and guided by unswerving Law.
SAINT. (*Smiling.*) So be it, for it is a Law "Thou shalt
Not kill," its sanction being that you hurt

Thereby yourself. I see you nod your head.
Hearken again. Man's duty is to learn,
And thereby to evolve. Tell me, O King,
Is everlasting war the atmosphere
Most suited for the culture of the mind ?
" Grow as the flower grows," at peace. Such was
The wisdom of a greater mind than yours.
Seek you that peace for these your people, or
Is war the only purpose of your will,
Careless of these your people's misery,
So that you add fresh glory to *your* name ?
A monarch's purpose is the common weal,
With wisdom as his constant counsellor.
Yet wisdom needs the eyes of purity,
And moral grandeur must denote the man
Who dares to say, " I rule my fellow-men."
A leader must be something of a saint,
And rule by virtue of the man he is,
By love, and not by sword's obedience.

KING. (*Summarising her argument.*) The good must join the forces of the true.

SAINT. Nay, more. Duality implies a third
To unify the two.

KING. (*Nodding.*) The human will.

SAINT. (*Shaking her head.*) Will is the driving force that lies behind
Each quality of man. Not will, my Lord,
But Beauty holds within her heart the keys
Of Purity and Truth. The Good, the True,
And binding all in one the Beautiful.
Yet Beauty shuns the dwelling-place of war,
And needs the summer stillness of a land
At peace wherein to flower and unveil
Her loveliness. This nothing means to you.
When all the purpose of your life is bent
On your own country's self-aggrandisement,
How shall the silent beauty that informs
Each fleeting circumstance attract your eye ?

The golden dawn that moves with silent feet
Across a sleeping sky ; the song of birds ;
The soothing rhythm of the restless sea ;
Are these without appeal ? Wild flowers wet
With dew ; the laughter of a child at play ;
The solemn wonder of the snowclad hills,
Flushed with the crimson glow of eventide ;
Can combat give you these ? The Good, the True,
But fairest of them all, the Beautiful.

KING. Must royalty be conversant with all ?

SAINT. True royalty, my Lord, does not depend
On accidents of birth, but blossoms as
A quality of mind.
(*Crossing to* KING, *who remains seated.*) Who would be King
Must prove himself a King, in kingly deeds
Of justice, moral strength . . . and clemency.
Is it a sign of greatness, does it well
Become your rank, to slay, or to have slain
These fearless captives of a fearful King ?
You would not with that jewelled hand, yourself
Presume in cold unfevered blood to kill
The meanest felon slave condemned to die.
Yet with a splendid air of casual
Command you speak the word that others shed
Their blood. Why other hand than yours, O King ?
(*Crescendo.*) Because you are afraid, because you know,
(KING *pushes* 2ND GIRL *away again ; she crouches, frightened, by the throne.*)
As only conscience knows, that were you swept
From out this vale of unreality,
And led by Justice to the throne of Truth,
And stood alone, bereft of friend or foe,
And then a quiet Voice : " O trembling one,
With bloody hand by which thy brother died,
Proclaim to us this law by which a King
May slay his brother . . . "

KING. (*Interrupting with a shout.*) No !

(*Springing to his feet—then more quietly.*) No, no.
(*Pacing up and down—then to the* SAINT.) You dare
To sit in judgment on the King ?

SAINT. (*With a smile, shaking her head.*) Not I,
My Lord, but you are judging you.

KING. Enough.
You ask of us a boon. Three human lives.
So be it. We will answer in one hour.
Till then you have our leave of absence. Go.

(COUNSELLOR *moves Right, and holds curtain or door open for* SAINT, *who goes out, followed by* COUNSELLOR.

2ND GIRL *crosses to* 1ST GIRL, *wakes her, and they go out Centre Back, leaving* KING, *who, without glancing at them, paces empty stage in profound thought, and finally settles down on throne to think.*)

SLOW CURTAIN

SCENE II

The Same.

KING *discovered same position as at end of Scene I.*

He gets up suddenly, having come to a decision, and after a moment's pause, passes out Centre Back.

(*Enter the two* GIRLS *Right. An atmosphere of suspense.*)

1ST GIRL. Comes he not yet ? (*Crosses to divan—Pause.*)
I would the fate of these
Three men were all the subject of his thought.
Rather I feel that yours and mine await
His ruling too.

2ND GIRL. (*By throne.*) 'Tis all the same to me,
Whose fate is linked with his. Whither he goes
I go, and his decision shall decide

My future too. Yet am I filled with fear,
And like me not the aspect of his eye.
Some dim foreboding lies about my heart
That nevermore will those his gentle hands
Caress me, nor the music of his voice
Encompass all my days with words of love.

1ST GIRL. If this your prophecy be true it needs
That we must seek elsewhere that sensuous ease
And luxury that these our bodies crave.

(*Begins to make up, and continues to do so intermittently, all through this scene.*)

It was not always so, this hungering
For cold philosophy. Time was the King
Was foremost in the realm for all that makes
A man, whether in sport or on the field
Of war, or in the gentler field of love.
(*Cheering up.*) Howbeit, this strange humour of our Lord
May prove perchance some passing mood that sweeps
Across the surface of his mind, which gone,
The light of dawn may yet disturb our cheer
And find us in the arms of revelry.

2ND GIRL. Would that it might be so, and yet I know
It is not so. Oft have I seen of late
The slow and thoughtful footsteps of the King
Pause on their daily round, the while he mused
Upon some common homely scene, as though
It held some wonder for his eyes. It was

(*Enter* COUNSELLOR *Centre Back.*)

But yesterday I found him motionless
Before a nursing mother and her babe . . .

COUNSELLOR. (*Coming straight down stage.*)
I, too, have watched him with a troubled eye,
Seeking to pierce the curtain of his mind.
Time was I questioned him, but he, with slow
And thoughtful smile, passed on without reply.
Wherefore I filled the compass of his day
With such a burden of immediate care
As left no time for such imaginings.

(2ND GIRL *goes up stage and looks through curtains.*)
And now, when most with loving thought I planned
To banish all such folly from his brain
With thoughts of war, and kingly offices,
This holy Mother comes with subtle mind
And womanly, to snare his restless will
(*Sneering*) In thoughts of higher things. What nobler thought
Can profit then a King than thoughts of war
And all the cares of kingly government ?
1ST GIRL. Or to uphold the customs of a king,
Those kingly habits of a thousand years ?
The goodly feasts that welcomed victory ;
Those gala nights of merriment that marked
The seasons' flight with due observances ;
The royal honours to some vassal prince
In manner seemly to his rank—what are
These now, but memories ? The pageantry
And splendour of the days when Empire was
A thought to stir the blood—where are they now ?
The greatness of the past is truly dead.
'Tis true enough the ancient festivals
Are still performed, and even now the King
Commands and lends his presence to our nights
Of revelry, but though the people say
" The King is with us," all the while his mind
Is wrapt about with deeper things.
2ND GIRL. (*From back.*) To think
A time there was, when ever at the close
Of day, when kingly duty paused awhile
To rest, the purple robe of darkening night
Would fold about a sleeping earth, and leave
The King with never counsellor but Love
And never subjects but the wheeling stars,
The sweetly-scented flowers and ourselves. (*Crosses to throne.*)
A doleful day indeed, when smiling Joy
Was banished from his bed by restless Doubt,

And Sorrow claimed the content of his mind. (*Sits on right arm of throne.*)

COUNSELLOR. Oh, Woman, foolish is the man whose life
Lies open to your troubled influence.
How precious must your wisdom be that men
Must buy it at the price of happiness!
The stars indeed were frowning on the King
When first this woman gained his mastery. (*Enter* SAINT *Right.*)
But now she comes.
Good Mother, what is this
That you have done, to poison thus your King
With swift and subtle venom in the mind,
Changing the noble aspect of a man
To something . . . in the semblance of a saint?

SERVANT. My Lord, the King.

(*Enter* KING *Centre Back, in monk's robe and sandals, without jewellery of any kind. All start back save* SAINT, *who smiles to herself.* 2ND GIRL *jumps to her feet and stands right of throne.*)

KING. (*From Back.*) "The semblance of a saint."
The semblance, maybe, but the substance, no.
The simple, humble texture of this robe
Is but the outward vesture of a thought,
The symbol of an attitude of mind.
From now henceforth the folly of the past
Is closed, and woman's wisdom in the days
To come shall grace this vacant throne.

COUNSELLOR. This vacant throne! What mean you then, my Lord?
Would you, then, abdicate upon the eve
Of war?

KING. Fear not, for there will be no war.

COUNSELLOR. No war? My Lord, I pray you . . . are you mad
To talk of peace when even now the hour
We dreamed of, you and I, is close at hand,
And waits alone your leadership? Beneath

Your feet three leaders of the foe depend
Upon your will, to live, or die at dawn.
Then let them die. Strike while the hour is ripe,
And lead your armies forth to victory.
KING. The men of whom you speak are even now
Upon their homeward way—by this, my hand,
Set free. No, no, most trusted friend and true.
I am not mad, nor have I forfeited
My royal right to occupy that throne.
Two persons o'er this land will henceforth reign,
Two persons in the outward form of one.
Myself that well you know, as modified
By something more than me, a wisdom culled
From Woman, and the beauty of her mind.
Her mind, I said; say rather, then, her heart.
For woman's reason lies not in the brain,
But comes uncalled for in the hour of need
From sources deeper yet.
COUNSELLOR. (*Scornfully.*) A woman King!
KING. (*Smiling.*) I think not, neither yet a man as you,
With foolish and untutored eye know both.
I am a man with manly qualities.
Yet is a woman's mind the complement
Of man's. It follows, if my logic serve
Me well, that only he in whom are found
The attributes of both should dare to call
Him King. Can you not understand?
COUNSELLOR. Too well.
Henceforth you reign, if not a woman-king,
A woman in the semblance of a king.
What though a woman's mind be complement
To ours, are there not both enough, that we
Must make of each an image of the two?
KING. You weary me who will not understand.
(*Exit* SERVANT *Centre Back.*)
(*To* SAINT, *turning to her.*) Good Mother, though the years as yet unborn
In this my life were countless as the drops

That fill the sea, yet would they not suffice
To lay before you all my gratitude.
This night has proved the crisis of the years,
The culmination of an age-long war
Between th'accepted order and the new.
The groove of custom, and an iron will—
A bitter fight, with freedom for reward,
And *you* have given me the victory.
(*Turning to all.*) Who conquers may dictate his terms to those
Who found defeat. In this momentous war
The field of battle lay within my mind.
Yet kingly thought is father to the law,
And my decision is my people's will.
Tradition fought me, but tradition dies.
Then harken to our purpose. Be it known
That this good Mother shall in days to come
Fulfil the office of our Counsellor.

COUNSELLOR. My Lord! (*Clutching back of* KING'S *robe, on his knees.*) What have I done, what left undone?
Is this your justice, this your gratitude
For years of faithful service at your side?
This night of nights upon the eve of war,
The final consummation of our plans
For such a mighty Empire as this world
Has never known—and yet to-night you choose
To fling me from you like a dog, and cast
Me forth into oblivion. Rather slay
Me, Lord, that I may perish by the hand
I ever tried to serve, so shall I die
Content.

KING. (*Gently drawing him to his feet.*) Unhand me, for I love you well,
And ever knew you as a loyal friend.
Yet must the yearning of a human heart
Be voiceless in affairs of monarchy.
All that your counsel made me, now I am,
Yet symmetry cries out for something more.

Of what avail shall manly virtue prove
Bereft of woman's gentleness ? Shall, then,
The half be equal to the whole ? This land
Of ours is peopled with a host of lives
That each performs the purpose of its type,
And I, who am their King and prototype,
Must needs reflect as in a crystal globe
The attributes of all. How can that be
While woman has no vioce within my mind ?

2ND GIRL. The voice of woman is the voice of love.

SAINT. And love was ever enemy to war.

COUNSELLOR. You think to rule with nothing more than love ?

KING. The hand of Justice clasps the hand of Love,
And Justice wears a sheathed, or naked, sword.
Yet shall the basic purpose of our life
Be henceforth Brotherhood. Oh, but I see
It now. The darkness of my mind dissolves
Before the virgin light of Truth. I see
As in a dream the wonder of it all,
Its royal beauty and its splendid truth.
At last I know, where I but dreamed before.
The movement of the stars, a swallow's flight,
That you are . . . what you are, and I a King,
All these are so because they must be so.
No God of Fortune, neither Luck nor Chance,
Decrees the narrow circle of our days.
The eyes of Evolution are not blind.
There is a Plan, a vast and noble Plan,
Behind the seeming chaos of our lives.
The rise and fall of Empire, birth and death,
And every little happening that seems
Of nothing worth, acts but a chosen part
Within the mighty drama of that Plan.
All is a slow becoming. Nothing is.
No living thing but moves with silent feet
Slowly towards its pre-appointed end.
(*To* SAINT.) I see it now, whose eyes were ever veiled

In vanity and lust, and foolish pride.
I see that I, who proudly call me King,
Serve but the will of Those more kingly yet,
Those Masters of the Wisdom Whom you serve.
And they in turn are players too, serving
The purpose of a mighty Cosmic Mind.
Yet are we all, the noblest and the least,
But scattered fragments of Eternity
Wrapped in a robe of Universal Law.

COUNSELLOR. Then men are equal each to each ?

KING. Not so,
For Brotherhood denies equality.
Since when were brothers of an equal age ?
Each little life of mineral or man
Is member of one family, and child
Of common parentage. Such thought involves
A grave responsibility for those
Who rule the lives of other men.

SAINT. 'Tis so,
My Lord, yet is a ruler's duty clear,
To guard each younger brother's destiny
As though it were his own.

KING. (*Nodding.*) Because you say
The sovereign and the subject share one life,
One heritage, one law.

(KING *crosses to throne and stands. A pause, then suddenly to* COUNSELLOR :)

Answer me this.
If life be one, what right has any man,
Or serf or king, to slay his brother ? (*Sits. A pause.* 2ND GIRL *sits L. front of throne.*) Well ?

COUNSELLOR. (*Sulkily and with sarcasm.*) What right ?
Only the immemorial right
To slay one's enemies lest they, in turn,
Slay you.

SAINT. (*Mildly.*) But why have enemies ?

COUNSELLOR. But this
Is madness.

SAINT. Why ? A country's enemies
Are those who lie in Nature's prison, bound
To one another in the dungeon depths
Of ignorance by poisoned bonds of hate.
Hate placed them there ; shall hatred set them free ?
(*Shaking her head slowly.*)
'Tis love alone that kills one's enemies
In that it kills their hate. O foolish man !
So girt about with prejudice and thoughts
Of other minds, you cannot think your own !

KING. (*Interrupting dreamily.*) Before the dreamy vision of my eyes
I see a world at peace wherein each man
Shall find his rightful place within this one
Vast family of all that lives ; wherein
The prince and warrior, the rich and poor,
The highest, and the lowliest in the land,
Shall offer each to each that mother-love
That now enfolds us all. Then will the hand
Of peace replace the all too bloody hand
Of war. Then will the captains and the kings
Of men be leaders as of merit, not
Of birth, and prove their greatness not in deeds
Of war, but deeds of service ; for this world
Is but a school wherein we learn to serve.

COUNSELLOR. (*After a pause.*) Then wherefore are you king ? Coincidence ?

SAINT. No, no, such has no place within the Plan.
Luck, Chance, Fate, and all the dear beliefs
(*Smiling.*) By which men think to substitute the law
Of laziness for that of life, all these
Are foolishnesses. Rather is he a king
Because he strove and strove to be a king
In many a life gone by. Such is the law
That as we sow, so in the round of time,
Unswervingly and faithfully we reap,
Whether the seed be happiness or woe.

KING. So in a day long dead I fiercely willed
To be a king—and am.
SAINT. Yours is the power
And yours the majesty—yours, too,
A ceaseless vigilance, lest you abuse
Your privilege and prostitute this power
To serve the ends of self. But so that you
Remember that you do but serve this Law
Of Laws, so long will you be truly king.
KING. If this be true, which bears the stamp of Truth,
What need, then, for the signs of kingliness ?
COUNSELLOR. True greatness ever chose simplicity
As needing nothing more. (KING *crosses back of throne.*)
KING. So will I too
Be simple, both in mind and circumstance.
This gaudy pageantry and pomp of power ;
(*Rises and walks R.*)
These empty titles of high-sounding fame ;
This lying semblance of servility
From those who fawn upon our will ; these nights—(*to* 1ST GIRL)—
Of pleasure and voluptuous ease ; all this
Is vanity, and as I see it now,
Of nothing worth.
1ST GIRL. (*Interrupting.*) To a philosopher.
Yet I for one am well content with this—
This vanity, and all the pageantry
And splendour of your fame.
KING. (*Gently.*) Because as yet
You are a child, and pleased with childish things.
But I, though young as yet, am older now
Than yesterday.
(*Breaking out and turning Left.*) Too long have I concealed
The light of Truth from my own eyes, but now
My very being yearns to tear aside
These . . . semblances, and know things as they are.
(*Catching sight of* 2ND GIRL. *More gently.*) Time was my loves were legion—nevermore.

Henceforth with single heart and mind I woo
The One Reality, and having found,
Become.

SAINT. And, having found, in time become.

2ND GIRL. My Lord has found the way to this Reality ?

KING. (*To* 2ND GIRL, *crossing to throne and sitting.*)
Deep through this dark bewild'ring maze of Life
There lies a Path, a lonely Path, that all
In time must tread. A Path that spans with swift
And arduous feet the many millioned years
That lie between this present and the long
Long journey's end. Strong must the traveller be,
And earnest, for the way is hard and steep.
The path of custom is an easier road
To tread, yet dawns a day within the life
Of every man, when, having tasted all
Experience, grown weary of desire,
And fruitless pleasure, and as useless pain,
He turns his face from ways of worldliness
And sets out on the last long journey home.

1ST GIRL. Yet some there are, my Lord, for whom this life
Is full of joy.

2ND GIRL. And sweet to those who love.

KING. (*To her.*) Yet is it all a dream, an idle dream,
Impermanent, unreal, full of woe. (*Turns round.*)
A foolish man who builds his house of life
Upon the shifting sands of circumstance.
For some there are, and wiser far than we,
Whose eyes contain the Vision, and whose feet
Are set upon this ancient Royal Road
That leads into the Land of Heart's Desire.
In them there dwells a deep abiding Peace,
A Peace, I think, no man can ever know
Until that man is half a woman.

COUNSELLOR. (*To himself.*) Half.

KING. No more. For balance is the key to power,
And woman without man were comfortless
As man bereft of woman. In the heart

Of all creation dwells this peace, and he
Whose heart is tuned to the same rhythmic beat
That ever pulses softly through the world
By night and day, will find his very soul
Pervaded with this deep abiding peace,
Such stillness, and such calm serenity,
As little empty words can ne'er describe.
Who builds the palace of his life on such
A rock as this, may smile on Fortune's frown,
And stand unshaken and at peace before
Man's deadliest foe of all, the whispered voice
Of Doubt.
(*Sitting up.*) Of such am I, who face you now,
Untouched alike by friend or any foe,
Self-confident, self-knowing and content.

SAINT. (*Approaching* KING.) You think because with strange half-opened eyes
You see just so much of the Plan wherein
You play your little part, that therefore you
Know all. Presumptuous man! But yesterday
You were a child, to-day but little more.
(KING *sits down again.*)
Ten years have come and gone, ten silent years
Since first I sought for Truth, and dared to woo
Reality. And now, to-day, though wise
And saintly in the puzzled eyes of men
My wisdom is but dust and foolishness
Beside the glory of the hidden Light.
Yet you, with boastful pride and pitiful,
Claim to know all, and dare to be content.
(*He remonstrates. She stops him.*)
Yet do I know the meaning of your mind,
And welcome you as Brother and as Friend
Upon that lonely Path we follow side
By side, not proudly, Friend, but with a deep
Humility.

KING. The words you speak are true.
Yet though the heart be humble, roams the will

As yet untamed, unfettered, splendid, free;
And I who ever failed to find a foe
Whose serried might was worth my vanquishing,
Shall I then fear the forces of myself?

SAINT. Who fights the enemy of self, and wins,
Need seek no greater foe.

KING. Maybe, yet so
It is, that in this greatest fight of all
We fight at peace within. A paradox
But true. Thus only am I well content.
(*Turning to others, and rising.*) But you, true servants of that other me,
How will it fare with you?
(*Crosses Right of* COUNSELLOR.)
My loyal friend
Of many years, no more shall we delight
In thoughts of war, and bloody politics—
The foolish dreamer has outgrown his friend.
Henceforth my armies fight, but not with swords;
They conquer, but no foreign field shall know
The feet of war, or captive home be harmed.
The armies of the future, humbly proud,
Shall tramp the weary pathways of the world
At peace, with never sword or spear but Truth,
And never shield or cloak but Gentleness.
Who follows me to-morrow must forsake
The paths of yesterday, and he who would
Advise the King in days to come must needs
Be clean of blood.
And so, as warrior
Farewell. As valued friend, be with us yet.
(*To* GIRLS, *from Centre stage.*) And you, deserted butterflies, who loved
The warm red sunlight of success that beat
Upon our throne, what does the future hold
For you? Some other noble Lord perchance—(2ND GIRL *gets to her knees*)—
Will smile elsewhere upon your loveliness?

2ND GIRL. (*Fiercely protesting.*)
My Lord and Master—no ! I am no slave
Of pleasure, no mere servant of desire.
I may be young, and poor, and nothing worth
To such as you, and yet I love you, Lord,
And will not let you go. You love me not.
I know it, but what matter that to me,
So that you never drive me from your side ?
(*Pleading.*) You will not make me go ?
KING. (*Whimsically—taking a step towards* 2ND GIRL.)
A foolish heart
To scorn the loves of ordinary men,
And choose a mere philosopher, whose heart
Is only filled with nebulous ideals,
With visions, and the fruits of abstract thought,
Unheeding of the hot, unthinking love
That glows within your eys. Yet such a love,
Though not returned . . . in kind, can only serve
To temper strength with gentleness.
(*To all, with bow.*) Henceforth
I travel not alone—the butterfly
Will bear the eagle company !
2ND GIRL. (*Getting up and crossing to* KING.) You mock,
My Lord, and treat me as a thing of nought.
Is this the fruit of cold philosophy ?
To scorn the noblest influence in the life
Of any man—a woman's love ?
(*Bitterly.*) 'Tis not
For me this high philosophy. For me
The flower-scented loveliness and peace
That lie within the garden of the heart.
For you, the lonely wind-swept heights of thought
That I shall never know.
(*With emphasis.*) But this I know.
That Love is greater than the mind. Thought may
Create, but Love enfolds and unifies
Within herself the products of the mind.
(*Scornfully.*) What was a woman to you yesterday ?

A soft voluptuous doll, a roguish smile
Of pleasing and attractive impudence,
A thing of pleasure, an amusing toy ;
And now, within the compass of a day,
Her mind becomes your "mental complement."
Is this the total of her attributes—
A mistress and a thoughtful counsellor ?
Is there no greater gift, no sacrifice
But this, that she may lay before your feet ?
(*Softly.*) Is love of no account, not fleshly love,
Nor mere companionship of mind, but love
That flowers in the heart, and offers all
It has and is, to merge and lose itself
Within the object of its love ? If such
A love as this can find no place within
My Lord's philosophy I nothing lose
Who was not born a man. Love is a flame,
A fierce consuming fire that burns away
The heart of self, and leaves . . . but happiness.
Love is the virgin mother of all pain,
And yet this sorrow is a thing of joy.
O man, with manly eyes, can you not see
That Love is everything ?

KING. (*Quite serious now.*) Such lingering doubt
As once I had is now dissolved before
Such evidence. But Love, like Truth and Joy,
Is many faceted. I too have met
With Love, but in her eyes was Peace, the calm
And brooding stillness of a moonlit sea.
Of old was Love—then Understanding came.
Compassion was their child. Yet Love is one,
And this my love for all humanity
Is sister to the love you bear for me.
You say you love me—be it so. Love on.
The strength you give me I shall lay in turn
At greater feet than mine. Would that I knew
Such heart's simplicity, such will to serve
The Silent Ones, as you, a woman-child

Have shown to-night for me. Yet so we learn
In all humility, and I who am
Your King, will strive in days to come to prove
Not all unworthy of your offering. (2ND GIRL *drops back.*)
(*Crosses to* 1ST GIRL. *To her.*)
And you, O worldly one, what must I learn
From you ? The goodly gift of calm repose
And peaceful equanimity ?
1ST GIRL. (*Placidly.*) What must
Be so will be, and neither god nor man
Can cease to make it so.
KING. I would the cares
Of government were half so swiftly solved !
(*To* SAINT.) And now, good mother . . . (*With hopeless gesture.*) But of what avail
To strain the might of words in vain attempt
To honour you. The guerdon of the past
Is mine to pay, the future will be yours.
SAINT. Say, rather, Theirs, my Lord, Whose will we are
Content to serve.
KING. (*Moving to exit Centre Back.*)
And so to rest.
(*Looking out through curtains.*) The night
Is passing, and the dawn is close at hand.
(*Turning back to all.*) So wanes the night of sorrow, and so dawns
A nobler and a happier day. My friends,
I give you greeting at the dawn of Day.
Henceforth we follow different paths to reach
The self-same Goal. May Wisdom ever guide
Your feet upon the way, may Beauty bear
You company, and at the journey's end,
May every heart find Peace. . . . (*Exit.*)

(SLOW CURTAIN AS THEY WATCH HIM GO.)

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